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Recommended Citation

Kelly, Robert, "augG2012" (2012). *Robert Kelly Manuscripts*. Paper 266.
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Bard

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Mulching, they're mulching
the fruit trees the ornamentals,
it isn't a hurricane,
it isn't weather,
it is young men and a woman
putting down flattened
cardboard cartons round
bases of trees, then mulch
on top of cardboard,
savvy, green and weird to watch—
I think these cartons
come from my heart.
But so do the weeds
they're trying to prevent,
nameless illegal verdancy
trying to dance round the foot of the tree—
oh all my trivial flowers
banished by such sly means—
I'll grow them up there
in the pure air of morning,
my weeds aloft
and let the angels worry.

17 August 2012

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In the broken body
you gave me
a sliver of glass
entered the heart

made its way
through the swamp of feelings
and touched the great
original doorway of that place

whose only business is my life— the glass
is bright, reflects
the passing moods of blood.

The coppery dark, the bright,
and to that blithe constant passage
add a little of its own
drawn from the heart wall

wounded but still working.
All the clouds on earth

don't erase the sun.
Something still runs

and this is me.

17 August 2012

THE PIANO

The piano
history of Western art
culture finance architecture
war.

The grand piano
history of color theory ambiguity
perspectiva artificialis
classic form the golden
mean the piano
the piano. The grand
piano. Steinway. Bösendorfer.
The animal.

It is a living factory
it calls your hands
culture calls your hands
your skin

also is part of it
the Escorial the piano
the grand piano the crucifixion,
the thing we dread the pedal
sostenuto the wire spring-wound hums
sympathetic vibration
the birchwoods by Oswiecim,
the relationship, redundancy

of octaves, the bird
in passing breaks the air
the piano heals the world
the maybe the culture
does culture heal
and who, and whom?
The piano is always waiting
always open,
 its wing lifted
the sound flies, on such an air
the piano is a bird with just one wing
the piano the piano is an argument
we will never win
a flock of camels snorting in moonlight
Western culture a leopard
coughing in the thicket
the piano is a jungle
a medieval man
the piano plays
the doll that sits before it
fiddling with the stool
higher, lower, the piano is an airplane
a fokke-wulf a clumsy Yak
the piano is a glass of water
the piano is Western history
the piano is full of water
the woman at the keyboard

is the second wife of Simon Magus
an alchemist invented the piano
the piano unscrews your head off right
and lets it out and lets it in
and fills you up.

The piano is a disarmament conference,
the piano is history
the piano is a sneak attack
a loaf of bread mangled by a dog
a friendly dog
the piano is too friendly
culture won't leave us alone.

17 August 2012

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Things that ask head
clouds that slip over the
determinedly propositional
no guide goes wrong
the “little phrase”
but that’s what a novel is
ask an obvious of
line ‘em up and shoot ‘em down
a practiced ugliness.

2.

Marksmen in the trees
yes they told me he
was a ‘sharpshooter’ what
we would call a sniper now
on his way to the Scind
he spelled it as they did
we would call it Pakistan
where does blood come from
where does it go

3.

Ultimately adverbial
like breath on a warm day

of air we say
breathing is
the national anthem of the mind.

4.

Turn the page before you
get to the end of
a kiss on which cheek
the whole of Belgium
hidden in these morning trees
so Caesar kissed her back
the river overflowed
one fine hair growing on the saddle of the ear.

5.

Ask me ask me my hand
raised in the sky
he cried to be known
to be challenged to speak
in language we come forth
we would call it Sumer
break up the alphabet
and give each child a piece
clay tablet U-bet
a taste for perfume a weakness for Brahms
but everything is there
already in the child

a school is made to make
the body feel uncomfortable all day long
to reinforce the Manichean strategy
on which the state depends
separate the body from the mind
divide impera

6.

To be here now
is to have come from
a far place
without remembering.

7.

Subtract the sky from the cloud
and divide by fear
equals a schoolroom anywhere
teach them to sit still and fantasize
the world outside their prison
give them stuff to think about
and take their lives away.

8.

hated school it kept me from learning
you learn from books and trees and crazy people
from the way streets cross other streets
and the way stores close at night

where people go when the lights are out
where the mind is made

you still believe that
there are notes left in the piano
a girl as pretty as a fountain pen
on the Baltic coast appear far out
twisted rubber-shirted cables messageless.

9.

Crazy people were best
they said everything they knew
held nothing back
a crazy person is a poem
everything there just figure it out
terrifying to think of true
seriatim like raindrops on a willow branch
“it was not raining”
amplitude of ampersands
connect me to the next man
a word is a hand.

10.

Sanity counts more than experience
broken parts
we walked on the sea at Boltenhagen
bracts of a few

flower in d minor
go out and feed
the hummingbirds call it morning prayer
what does Torah teach
the dead mouse in the pantry does it tell?
Cases of conscience
man on a string
what exactly is my function in your life
isn't your own body enough for you
you eat my clock.

11.

Every child knows
there's something on the other side of the sky
freedom for it
pocket penknife
practice on dead leaves
studying what departure means
the go part of gone.

12.

Children listen
the rusted submarines
deep off Nantucket
bedtime stories of the wives
translate from archaic Greek
forgery began before writing did

the gospel of Matthew in Linear B
don't fail the fugue
things ask head
things ask hands
peas porridge in the pan
nine months old
almost ready to be.

13.

Astyanax his body poor
boy thrown down from the wall
sometimes you protect the city
best by dying at the gate
this is a world of forfeits
liberties and luxe and lepers
magic in the air
you are never there
you're a character
in my play I'm tired of writing
go ask Marsten or Dekker to do you
sprawled on the piazza
interview the sun.

14.

Cherry pits spat sidewalk a youth ago

tell me all I know

so it agains
temblor the china closet shakes
men oft forget to say their prayers
monarchy is best for kings can die
we all know how
the tall tree across the stream
shows sky must be about to die
music ran through the house
the Bible tried to follow
too tired to sleep too wake to watch
don't say I never told you
I never told you.

18 August 2012

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Then I looked at the ocean
 then I looked at the trees
 forest thick. A green
 going on. Both forms
 are continuities.
 Bounded somewhere
 by someone's eyes.
 Time makes one me then
 and one me here. Lover
 in limbo. Butterflies go by.

2.

When you carry a man around
 on your feet and your songs
 come out of his mouth
 can you really know
 who you actually are?

3.

What comes walking
 out of the trees?
 Identities.

Just pray
 they have functions,

are not just masks.
Why would a hornet
sting my ankle?
Am I caught in a myth
where time hurts?

4.

In the not-dream
I take out my heart
and examine it. It is hard
to put it back in
but I succeed.
The not-dream is followed
by the not-sleep.
The heart goes on.
A stinging fly
with an emerald eye.

5.

Scrape me off the floor and start again.
Mosaic policy. Piece by piece.
So many words
to say the single word of God.
The book is like the people
it assembles from all parts,

it comes together
with loose edges. Heroes
hold up the house.
Scholars prance on the roof.

18 August 2012

ANCESTORS

Wisdom ancestors
and flesh-eating ancestors—
both are found.
They stand around,
don't you see?
Everybody you see
when you close your eyes
is your ancestor.

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I have to look at what I am given
what else is the moment for but
to rip the jungle out of the imagined
and plant it right here, tigers
orchids vines intact. Otherwise
the moment is an old cardboard
suitcase left on the bus, nothing
in it but next week's Daily News.
I have to touch it, have to hear it
squeal like wet glass under fingertip.
Otherwise everything otherwise.

19 August 2012

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The shadow on the wall
the Grand Canal
and over it that
rainbow bridge Rialto—
then the eyes change
and it was shadow again
on my own wall.
My own wall.

19 August 2012

= = = = =

I take my stand in the unseen world
the land where more than men
meet more than women
and a third kind comes,

the sound of that place
is with me all the time
though I can't always make out
the words or even the tune

that they're always saying,
saying music the way a rock
says water and the sea
listens, but there are words,

I swear there are words
that sometimes I can hear
and repeat them, slowly
rolling them around my lips

until they catch my breath
and let me speak too,
But I want to be
where such words come

and want to be with them
who speak them
and afterwards be silent
with them, walking around.

19 August 2012